

**Remarks Given by
Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman
March 24, 2007, Franklin, IN
Franklin College Women in Leadership**

My mother and my neighbors have been giving me newspaper clippings with all of the buildup about this event for a few weeks now, telling me I'd better have something good to say, but no pressure!

Johnson County is home for me now. My husband and I relocated from Bedford after Governor Daniels and I assumed office. It was a bittersweet thing to leave Bedford and Lawrence County. I was born there, raised there, and served the people there for many years. But, I have been delighted to find that folks here are just as warm and welcoming as my Bedford friends. It's a great place to live and I'm glad we made the move.

Franklin College is one of Indiana's gems, and we are working hard to make sure that the very best students continue to enroll here. I'm especially proud of this college's special place in Women's History here in Indiana. You deserve the gratitude of every woman who has ever taken a college course in our state. You did set the precedent for it, after all. Franklin College was the first to accept female students, and you did a great service to our state in making that groundbreaking decision.

I spent the past two days with one of your trustees, General Martin Umbarger. I mentioned I would be speaking here for women's history month. He said, "You tell them 18 percent of our force is female. Colonel Marge Courtney is currently the garrison commander at Camp Victory in Baghdad...fully in command and control."

ENCOURAGE EXCELLENCE

In a much different way, I've already been celebrating women's history month in the State house. We've just finished the final selection of paintings created by women artists in Indiana that will be displayed in the Lt. Governor's office. There's an incredible wealth of talent in Indiana, and I'm proud to be able to showcase some of the talent that is coming from Hoosier women. I hope you'll stop by sometime and see for yourself.

Those women artists represent some of Indiana's greatest resources: our people—our talented, passionate, motivated people—people like Col.

Courtney. We have a responsibility to encourage Hoosiers like them—to encourage excellence whenever and wherever we can. That encouragement is especially critical for women.

When I talk to women who are leaders in their fields, I hear a common refrain. They think they have to be over-qualified in order to succeed. When I talk to men who are in similar positions, I hear a different tune to their credit. They think they were born qualified.

It's very interesting to hear the two sexes describe their own competence to lead and succeed. I can certainly relate to that sense of being the underdog and needing to prove myself.

I am, from time to time, the only skirt in a room full of suits, and I know the challenges women face in responding to the call to leadership. Thankfully though, we live in a country and a culture that appreciates women leaders.

A few months ago, I traveled to Taiwan and Vietnam, leading a trade delegation. It was a great trip, and I came home very aware of the differences between our cultures. I walked into a meeting with some of their top leaders one day and saw that my name plate read “Mr. Becky Skillman.” They certainly weren't expecting ME. It was by far my favorite moment of the trip. But it drove home the point that not everyone expects a woman to lead.

In Indiana, we have a responsibility to ourselves and to our daughters, our nieces, and all the young women of the next generation—to step up and do what President Kennedy called us to do years ago. He said, “It is time for a new generation of leadership, to cope with new problems and new opportunities. For there is a new world to be won.”

A rejuvenated Indiana is our new world. And we have the leaders, entrepreneurs, volunteers and forward-thinkers who will mold the future right here in our presence today.

Leadership is not unique to any one group of people, any one sex or any one age group.

Leadership is about action, not position. In the act of living, leaders are forged. The challenges we face—age, experience, gender, race—make us work harder and learn more. They develop our character.

As I said, I'm used to being in the minority, so to speak, but that has never held me back. If anything, the challenge of proving myself, has made me a better leader. It can make every woman a better leader.

LEADERSHIP = ACTION

You do not have to be a Governor or a CEO to provide effective leadership. In fact, I'm sure we all know people who are in leadership positions, but are NOT leaders. The people who truly lead are the ones who are willing to do the work. It's that simple.

Laziness will steal your success. Followers take the path of least resistance. Leaders take joy in conquering a challenge.

I want to add to that thought: Leadership does not equal recognition. It is often a thankless job to do what has to be done. I only have to remind you of everything your mother or grandmother has done for you to prove my point. Think of the countless hours they invested you—teaching you, providing for you, helping you grow. But it's not likely that anyone put them on a pedestal for it. They simply chose to do the work that needed to be done.

There's certain humility inherent in that kind of service. That's part of great leadership. Like soldiers who do their duty whether or not anyone is watching. It is rare to see them as they pile on body armor, hoist their guns, and march into battle in the desert heat. They simply do it because it has to be done. We learn what duty and honor is from people like that.

Mothers and soldiers don't have big titles and few people would ever recognize them by name, but they show us what leadership is every day. They lead by choosing to do the work that others are unwilling or unable to do.

Hard work is not glamorous. It requires sacrifice and a willingness to serve for the good of a higher cause. Sacrifice is required of all of us. We have to commit our energy, our time and our talent to be true leaders.

I recently attended the funeral of a dear colleague. Senator Anita Bowser and I were sworn into the Indiana State Senate together in 1992. We didn't always share the same perspective on the issues, but she endeared herself to me, as she did to everyone who met her. She went far beyond the call of duty to support her fellow leaders, male and female, Democrat and Republican. She led with tenacity and conviction, and she was also lovely and kind—a delightful blend of femininity and rigor.

She was 86 years old and terribly ill at the end of her life. But I will never forget her last day in the Senate. She was in pain and needed a wheelchair, but she chose to rise to the Senate microphone to speak passionately about her convictions. The easy thing would have been to stay home and rest. But Anita chose to do her duty and contribute to the deliberation of the Senate. She showed us a little bit of the sacrifice of leadership that day. She taught us an important lesson.

LEADERSHIP IN THE LITTLE THINGS

It has been said that “Great opportunities to help others seldom come, but small ones surround us every day.” As I have traveled around the state I have met thousands of people—employees, volunteers, parents, teachers and students—from all walks of life. They share a common trait. None of them believes that they are doing big things. But by taking advantage of the small opportunities every day, they are accomplishing big things and making a tremendous difference in the lives of others.

Consistently wise decisions in the small things, will eventually bring you to a point where you are called upon to make a big decision: how to vote on a bill that will affect every person in the state of Indiana, what direction to take a company when thousands of jobs are at stake, how to spend a multi-million dollar budget responsibly.

MENTORS

The good news is that decisions like that aren't made in a vacuum. Every leader has help. Mothers had mothers of their own, soldiers have commanding officers. I'm sure everyone in this room can think of an important person—a friend, a teacher, a parent—who has helped you make good decisions and reach your goals.

For me, that special person was my grandfather. I was the first-born of five granddaughters. He always taught me that I was a competent person and that I could take a challenge.

From the time I was very young, Grandpa always spoke to me on his level, like an adult. He had a keen interest in politics and government. He was a disciplined, loyal man, godly and smart. I learned to expect respect from him, and I learned to expect respect from other people. It never occurred to me that I couldn't or shouldn't run for public office at the ripe old age of 25. My Grandfather taught me that I was just as qualified as anyone else.

When I was getting my start in politics and government I was largely on my own. There simply were no other women there to mentor me. My Grandfather was really the person who helped shape my life and the direction I've taken as a leader.

My Grandfather mentored me. That was his leadership. He didn't lead troops into battle. He didn't become a CEO or win elected office. Instead, he took the time to listen...to teach...to inspire me to achieve my goals throughout my life. We can all do that.

Hoosiers, young and old, have proven time and again their potential for greatness.

I know—I've listened to their stories as I've traveled around the state. All of them have had help. People need others to listen, to teach, to believe in them. If you take up the challenge to be that person for someone else, then you have already become a leader.

LIFE LESSONS

There was a minister who used to end every sermon with what he called "shoe leather points." They were the practical things he wanted people to take away from his message and use throughout the week. I'd like to end my time here with some of my own shoe leather points—some practical lessons I have learned over the years.

The first is to aim high and maximize your potential. The Governor and I have pledged to do all that we can to develop the great potential we all know exists in Indiana. We pledge to work each and every day to create new jobs, new opportunities, and a new climate of prosperity for each of you in this

room to embrace. You do your part to be prepared; we'll do our part to build the opportunity.

The second lesson I have learned is to give back to others. We are obligated to live our lives in a way that benefits more than ourselves. Each of you understands what that means. Many people believe that what makes them happy is having someone else do something for them, but in reality, it is the opposite that is true. When we serve our family, our neighbors, and our community, we always get back more than we give. Servant leadership is, perhaps, leadership in its truest form.

The third lesson is to lead by inspiration. One of my favorite quotes comes from John Quincy Adams. He wrote, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, and become more, you are a leader." His lesson to all of us is that leadership can come from anywhere. You do not have to be a CEO or a Governor to be a leader. We can all be leaders by supporting those around us and enabling them to dream more, learn more, and become more.

This last bit of advice may run contrary to what you have come to believe in your life journey so far. But one of the biggest secrets to true success is to give yourself a reserve of time and energy. That is probably just the opposite of what you would expect to hear, and it is advice that I need to follow, as well.

You should work hard and give of yourself, but you also have to take care of yourself. If you schedule every minute of your time and use every ounce of energy, when something out of the ordinary happens—and it always does—where will you find the strength to deal with it? Say no when you need to, so that when you say yes, your heart will be in it.

CONCLUSION

I am certainly glad I said "yes" to this group. You have a lot of spirit, and that's inspiring to me.

I want to leave you with a question – what is the challenge that is in front of you right now? That task you've been procrastinating about for weeks. A friendship that badly needs to be reconciled. It could be filing the paper work to run for elected office. It could be enrolling in courses at Franklin College this summer.

I don't know where you are, but I am certain that you are not facing a challenge that you cannot overcome with help, with courage, with energy. You can't climb a mountain sitting down. So, make the choice now. Stand up and conquer the small thing first. That's what my Grandfather taught me, and his advice has never led me astray.

Indiana is full of opportunity for you. I invite you to be a leader today, to take those opportunities, conquer the challenges and bring our state, Johnson County, and Franklin College into a bright new future.

Thanks for having me today.